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Agenda Item 6- Pakistan (UPR) (12 June 2008)

Intervention by Nasir Aziz Khan

Mr. Chairman,

Several statements during the Universal Periodic Review of Pakistan called upon the government of Pakistan to remove restrictions on the freedom of religion or belief, to amend legislation which discriminates against persons belonging to minority religions and, in general, to protect the freedom of religion and belief. We urge the government of Pakistan to take serious note of these recommendations.

Moreover, Mr. Chairman, several recommendations were made with regard to women's rights, gender equality and opposing violence and discrimination against women. We would wish to call upon the government of Pakistan to implement these recommendations seriously.

As well, observations were made during the UPR debates on issues related to the judiciary in Pakistan and the need for separation of the powers of the judiciary from the executive and the independence of the judiciary. We believe such matters should be rated high priority in Pakistan today.

Mr. Chairman, regions now under direct Pakistan control, and which leave little room for a proper democratic legislature and judiciary, as in Gilgit / Baltistan, need immediate attention. Moreover, the improper disappearances of Baluch human rights activists and the open war of the government on the Baluch people in the south – all these need immediate re-consideration. The water, linguistic and cultural rights of Sindhis, Pashtoons and Seraikis must be protected in the Pakistan federal system. Moreover, we ask the government of Pakistan to rescind the present ruling that in the elections in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir only those who assert in writing that they agree with the accession of their part of Kashmir to Pakistan can have a seat in the POK parliament.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that a serious effort must be made for the Pakistan authorities to satisfy the political, civil, economic, social and cultural aspirations of the Pakistani people. The people have waited too long for their democracy to be realised and it is time that their election wishes be recognised.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

